

Message Text

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SUBJECT: OFFICIAL VISITS-LET'S PUT VENEZUELA OFF-LIMITS FOR
WEEKEND OFFICIAL VISITS

1. WE HAVE HAD ORAL AND INFORMAL WRITTEN EXCHANGES WITH THE DEPARTMENT ABOUT THE CONTINUING AND INCREASING NUMBER OF OFFICIAL VISITORS COMING TO TRY TO DO BUSINESS ON WEEKENDS IN VENEZUELA. THOSE FAMILIAR WITH VENEZUELA KNOW THAT VENEZUELAN'S STRONGLY OPPOSE DOING ANY BUSINESS ON WEEKENDS, AND THAT FORCING THEM TO DO SO COSTS US A GREAT DEAL IN OUR IMPORTANT RELATIONS WITH VENEZUELA. WE ARE PUTTING THIS IN FORMAL TELEGRAM FORM SO THAT IT WILL BE CLEAR THAT OPPOSITION TO WEEKEND BUSINESS VISITS IS NOT DUE TO ANY LACK OF CONSTRUCTIVE HELP BY INDIVIDUAL DEPARTMENT OF EMBASSY OFFICERS, BUT IS BASED ON A CONSIDERED EMBASSY ASSESSMENT THAT SUCH WEEKEND BUSINESS VISITS ARE SERIOUSLY IMPAIRING OUR RELATIONS WITH VENEZUELAN OFFICIALS. WE SUGGEST THAT THIS TELEGRAM BE SHOWN TO THE AIDES OF OFFICIALS PLANNING TO VISIT VENEZUELA. WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON HANDLING VISITS EFFECTIVELY: OUR CONCERN HERE IS MERELY ABOUT THE DETRIMENTAL EFFECT OF WEEKEND BUSINESS VISITS, WHICH MAY NOT BE GENERALLY REALIZED.

2. FOR SOUND PERSPECTIVE, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT VENEZUELA IS OF CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE IN U.S. FOREIGN RELATIONS. IT IS FIRST IN LATIN AMERICA AND FIFTH IN THE WORLD IN U.S. INVESTMENT--\$3 BILLION. IT IS THIRD IN LATIN AMERICA AND TWELFTH IN THE WORLD IN U.S. EXPORT TRADE--\$1 BILLION. WE ARE CLOSING DOWN OUR AID

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PAGE 02 CARACA 09135 252221Z

PROGRAM. OUR RELATIONS, WHILE IMPORTANT, ARE NOT EASY.

3. VENEZUELAN STRONGLY RESIST DOING ANY BUSINESS ON WEEKENDS. THEY HAVE LARGE FAMILIES. IN THIS CLIMATE THE BEACHES OPERATE ALL THE YEAR. ALL VENEZUELAN OFFICIALS AND BUSINESSMEN, AND MOST FOREIGNERS AS WELL, GO TO THE BEACHES ON THE WEEKEND. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT BUSINESS FUNCTIONS CANNOT BE ARRANGED ON WEEKENDS. SOME VISITORS' AIDES HAVE ARRANGED THEM OR INSISTED THAT WE DO SO, AND SEEMED TO BELIEVE WE HAD BEEN LAZY OR UNRESPONSIVE FOR NOT DOING SO ON OUR OWN INITIATIVE. WHAT THEY DID NOT REALIZE WAS HOW MUCH THIS EGO-SATISFACTION FOR THEMSELVES OR THEIR BOSSES COSTS US IN RELATIONS WITH THE VENEZUELAN.

4. THIS WEEKEND OFFICIAL VISITING IS OF CONSIDERABLE MAGNITUDE HERE. WE ARE ON THE LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS TO OTHER SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES, AND ARE REPUTED TO BE A GOOD TOURISTIC AREA. EACH AIDE OF A DEPARTMENT OR OTHER AGENCY OFFICIAL SEEMS TO BELIEVE THAT THAT VISIT IS AN EXCEPTION AND THAT ANY FAILURE TO LAY ON A FULL SOCIAL-BUSINESS PROGRAM IS AN AFFRONT TO HIS PRINCIPAL. WE DO NOT SEE IT THAT WAY. WE OFTEN HAVE TWO OR THREE OFFICIALS ARRIVING ON ONE WEEKEND. WE BELIEVE THE VENEZUELAN WOULD BE RUDE IF THEY DID NOT RECEIVE AN IMPORTANT U.S. OFFICIAL DURING THE WORKING WEEK, BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS RUDE FOR THEM TO RESIST OR REFUSE WEEKEND INVITATIONS.

5. LET US MAKE IT CLEAR THAT WE DO NOT OPPOSE HIGH U.S. OFFICIALS COMING HERE ON WEEKENDS. HIGH OFFICIALS SOMETIMES CANNOT EASILY USE WORKING DAYS FOR TRAVEL, AND PER DIEM COSTS ARE RELATIVELY SMALL AND CAN APPROPRIATELY BE USED TO LET THE OFFICIAL REST UP FOR HIS BUSINESS.

6. WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON HANDLING IMPORTANT VISITORS WELL, IN TERMS OF THEIR OWN SATISFACTION, AND OF ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THEIR MISSION. THE FOREGOING IS INTENDED TO PREVENT UNINTENDED IMPAIRMENT OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH VENEZUELA BY ATTEMPTING TO DO BUSINESS ON WEEKENDS.
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